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KARMAL, Babrak

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(BABRAK Karmal)
(Phonetic: BaBRAK)

AFGHANISTAN

President, Revolutionary Council (since December 1979)

Addressed as:
Mr. President



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Despite constant rumors of his imminent removal, Babrak Karmal remains the Soviet Union's number-one [redacted] in Afghanistan. He was installed as his country's leader after a bloody Soviet-engineered coup in 1979. In addition to the presidency, he served as Prime Minister from December 1979 until June 1981 and has been secretary general of the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) since December 1979.

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[redacted] he has only limited popularity among his countrymen. [redacted]

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Since taking office Babrak has tried to gain legitimacy and international recognition for his government. He has broadened the government's political base by including some military leaders and non-Communists in the Cabinet and the Revolutionary Council (the main executive and quasi-legislative body). His efforts so far have not satisfied the general populace, who oppose Soviet intervention; in the eyes of his own people, as well as of the world in general, [redacted]

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Communist Connection

Babrak, a longtime Communist, began his leftwing activities around 1950 as a student at Kabul University. Arrested for leftist agitation on campus, he was jailed during 1952-56. After his release he became an active Communist; he joined the PDPA when it was formed in 1965. In 1967 the PDPA split over differences in party strategy. Babrak and his followers favored increased political agitation against the monarchy and formed the Parcham (Banner) faction, while the more cautious members formed the Khalq (People) faction. In 1977 he returned to the party fold and was named its vice chairman. [redacted]

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When the Communists seized control in April 1978, Babrak became a deputy prime minister and vice chairman of the Revolutionary Council and appeared to be the second most important figure in the regime. In late June and early July, however, the leaders of Babrak's Parcham faction were exiled. Babrak was sent to Czechoslovakia as Ambassador and, after being dismissed in September, remained in Eastern Europe until [redacted] December 1979. [redacted]

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Career and Personal Data

Babrak comes from a prominent family in Pushtunistan, a rural area that borders Pakistan, and may be related to the late President Mohammad Daoud. In 1949 he entered the law faculty at Kabul University. After his release from jail in 1956, he received a law degree (1957) and served in the Army for a year (1958). From 1958 until 1965 he was a minor official in the Planning Ministry. In 1965 Babrak won a seat in Parliament, where he displayed his skills as an orator and political tactician. He was defeated in 1966 but regained his seat in 1969. His career in Parliament ended in 1973, when the legislature was dissolved. Babrak remained out of the public eye until 1978. [redacted]

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[redacted] He speaks several Afghan dialects, English, and some German. Babrak, who is about 53, may be married and have four children. [redacted]

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[redacted] He has five brothers, two of whom are active Communists. [redacted]

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21 May 1982

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